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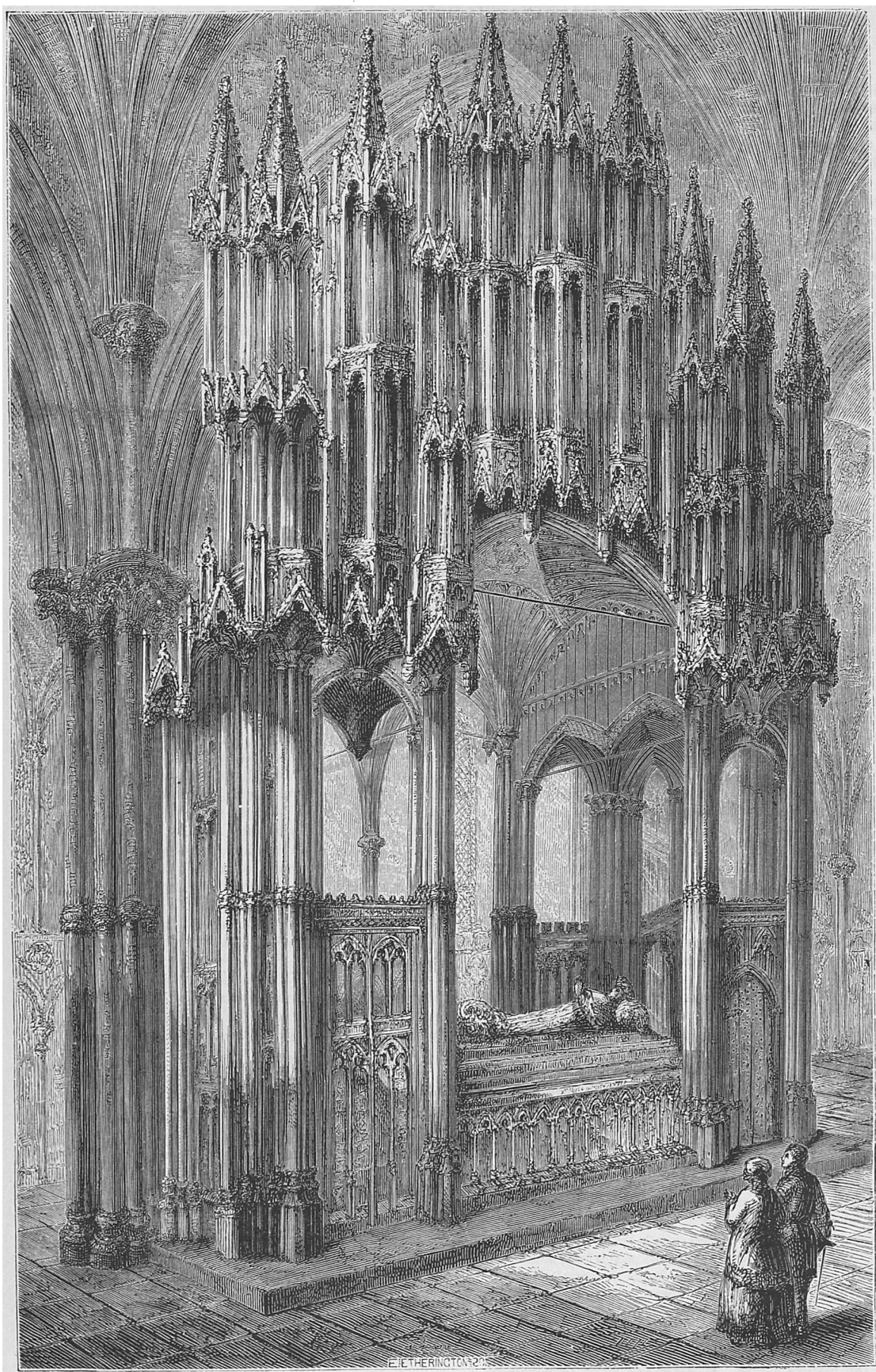
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CARDINAL BEAUFORT'S CHANTRY, WINCHESTER CATHEDRAL.

WINCHESTER CATHEDRAL.

WINCHESTER is one of the few cities in England at the present day, to which one may safely apply the epithet, *venerable*. A large cluster of ennobling memories seems to have settled upon that ancient place. Its history can be traced up to the time of the Britons. The Romans built many edifices in it, in the second century of the Christian era. The monarchs of the West Saxons, in the days of the heptarchy, made it their capital, and spent large sums in embellishing it; though their works were frequently destroyed by the ravages of the Danes. Egbert, the first king of all England, was crowned in it; so was William Rufus, and so was the lion-hearted Richard, when he came back from the holy war. Most of the monarchs at that day left London at Christmas and Easter, and here celebrated both these festivals in great state. Here Henry V. held his parliament before embarking at Southampton to spread terror and devastation through France. Here, Queen Maude, being greatly pressed by her rival, Stephen, spread abroad the report that she was dead, and disposing her fair limbs in a coffin, was carried safe and sound through the midst of the besieging army. Here, too, a gallant army of cavaliers shut themselves up in 1642, and held the town and castle against the roundheads for a long time, till being driven out by Sir William Waller, one of old Noll's generals, the fortress was destroyed, all except the chapel.

The castle and chapel were both famous places. In the chapel Hubert, the pope's legate, sat as judge, in 1072, in the dispute between the rival sees of Canterbury and York, and awarded the supremacy to the former, from that time forward and for evermore; and when the castle disappeared, the assizes were held here, and still are—the Nisi Prius judges sitting under the identical round table at which the famous knights of Prince Arthur sat and feasted, and quaffed their sack, and passed their quips, and cracks, and gibes, and jests, goodness knows how long ago. What a revolution! Mr. Serjeant Ponderous supporting a demurrer, or moving for a rule *nisi*, against some lawless railway company, with his horsehair rubbing against the spot whereon Sir Lancelot du Lake, Sir Tristram, Sir Pelleux, Sir Gawain, Sir Gareth, etc. satisfied the cravings of their knightly appetites.

Nor was the place less famed for piety and learning than for warlike renown. It had, it is said, fifty parish churches at one time, of which only a very small number remain. An abbey, too, there was renowned, for its sanctity and wealth, and so early as 1300, John Pontissard, of pious memory, bishop of the diocese, founded a college, dedicated to St. Elizabeth of Hungary, which, however, was destroyed in the general wreck of religious houses consequent upon the change of creed of Henry VIII.

But none of these edifices could compare to the abbey and cathedral. The present edifice was commenced in 1079 by Bishop Wakelyn, a Norman, improved and enlarged by the good William of Wykeham, and finally retouched by Bishop Fox. The convent consisted of a prior and forty-two monks, and flourished in splendour for nearly nine hundred years, until it too was dissolved by Henry VIII., who instituted the present foundation, and dedicated it to the Holy Trinity. The length of this splendid fabric from east to west is five hundred and forty-five feet; of these Our Lady's chapel includes fifty-four, and the choir one hundred and thirty-six. The length from the iron door, near the entrance of the choir, to the porch at the west end is three hundred and fifty-one feet; the length of the transepts is a hundred and eighty-six feet; the breadth of the body below the transepts is eighty-seven feet, and of the choir forty. The vaulting in the inside is twenty-six feet high; the exact height of the tower is one hundred and thirty-eight feet and a half, and its breadth fifty feet by forty-eight. The prospect from the west end of the middle aisle to the east window, beyond the choir, is striking and impressive in the highest degree. It needs but to be once seen to make evident the wonderful adaptation of the Gothic architecture to the production of those feelings of reverence and

solemnity and sublimity which are closely akin to religious awe.

The republican soldiers under Sir William Waller played sad havoc with several of the rich decorations of the interior, but enough survived, and enough has since been added, to make it one of the grandest monuments which England contains, of the piety, taste, and enthusiasm of our ancestors.

Behind the altar is the royal vault, which contains the bones of the Saxon kings, and one or two Danish and Norman. Canute and William Rufus, the conqueror's son, lie side by side. The latter was brought, a bleeding and "unwholesome carcase," in a peasant's cart from the New Forest, where Tyrrel shot him, and was here buried silently and without ceremony.

The church contains several chantries, the erection of piety, or gratitude, or affection. That of Cardinal Beaufort, which we have chosen for illustration, is probably more remarkable than any, not only for its own intrinsic beauty, but for the many historical reminiscences which surround the name of its founder. We shall describe it in the words of Mr. Britton:—

"Beaufort's chantry consists of clustered piers, with a pannelled screen at the base, an open screen at the head or west end, and a closed screen at the east end. There are doors on the north and south sides, and the whole is surmounted by a mass of canopies, niches, and pinnacles, which bewilder the sight and senses by their number and complexity. Beneath this gorgeous canopy is an altar-tomb in the centre of the enclosure, with the statue. . . . Milner says, 'that the figure represents Beaufort in the proper dress of a cardinal: viz., the scarlet coat and hat, and long depending cords, ending in tassels of ten knots each.' The low balustrade and tomb, the latter of which is lined with copper, and was formerly adorned on the outside with the arms of the deceased, enchased on shields, are of gray marble. The pious tenor of his will, which was signed two days before his death, and the placid frame of his features in the figure before us, which is probably a portrait, lead us to discredit the fictions of poets and painters, who describe him as dying in despair.* Regarding the statue, Mr. Britton says in another place,† "The effigy of Beaufort is a vulgar clumsy piece of workmanship, even worse than its near neighbour, that of Sir John Cloberry. We cannot otherwise account for the extreme badness of this statue than by supposing that it was placed there at a time much latter than the building of the chantry, indeed since the Reformation. It seems rather the workmanship of a stonemason than of a sculptor."

It would be an unpardonable omission to dismiss the subject of the chantry without saying a word or two as to the cardinal himself, especially since Shakspeare has immortalised him, in his drama of "Henry VI." He is there, however, represented as the very pink of insolent priests, proud, luxurious, covetous, and a despiser of the truths he professed to teach. In the very first scene in the play, Gloucester is made to say to him:—

———"Thou lov'st the flesh,
And ne'er throughout the year to church thou go'st,
Except it be to pray against thy foes."

Further on we meet with him in a brawl on Tower-hill, in which Gloucester calls him "a pill'd priest," "a manifest conspirator, who gave indulgences to rogues," "a Winchester goose," "a wolf in sheep's array," "a scarlet hypocrite," and the bishop, with rather unbecoming warmth for a man of his cloth, threatens "to have Gloucester's heart's blood." In the third act, in the parliament-house scene, Gloucester sums up his character as follows:—

"Presumptuous priest! this place commands my patience,
Or thou shouldst find thou hast dishonoured me.
Think not, although in writing I preferred
The manner of thy vile outrageous crimes,
That therefore I have forged or am not able
Verbatim to rehearse the method of my pen:

* Britton's "History and Antiquities of the See and Cathedral Church of Winchester." pp. 95–6. † p. 81.

No, prelate; such is thy audacious wickedness,
Thy lewd, pestiferous, and dissentious pranks,
As very infants prattle of thy pride.
Thou art a most pernicious usurer;
Froward by nature, enemy to peace;
Lascivious, wanton, more than well beseems
A man of thy profession and degree."

The general opinion now is, however, that the poet, taking Holinshed for his sole authority, did the prelate wrong. Proud, ambitious, and ostentatious he was, no doubt; but these are vices too common amongst men in power to warrant us in picturing the cardinal as a monster of undiluted iniquity. The times he lived in were turbulent; men's ideas of right and wrong had not yet assumed that fixity they now have. The duties of ministers of religion were not so clearly defined as they now are. The assumption of the cowl did not necessarily involve a real and veritable repudiation of worldly cares and pursuits. High-born priests of rank were still turbulent barons; base-born priests of no rank were often drunken, ignorant louts.

Beaufort was the son of John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, by his third wife Catharine Swinford. He studied law at Oxford, and afterwards at Aix la Chapelle, but on entering the church, his royal extraction procured his speedy elevation to the prelacy. In 1397, he was appointed to the see of Lincoln. In 1404, we find him Lord Chancellor of England, and Bishop of Winchester. He had been three times Lord Chancellor by 1417, and some idea may be formed of his wealth from the fact that he lent the king, Henry V., his nephew, twenty thousand pounds—an immense sum in those days—to assist in carrying on the war against France, for which he received the crown as security. He was sent on various important state missions to the Continent, and was present at the Council of Constance. His influence in England was at this time all powerful. He was appointed one of the guardians of the young king, Henry VI., during his minority, and in 1424, was a fourth time Lord Chancellor.* In the year 1425, however, the dissensions between him and Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester, the Protector, which ended in the death and ruin of the latter, and which agitated all England, first came to a head. Their first outbreak is thus quaintly described by Holinshed: "Somewhat before this season fell a great division in the realm of England, which of a sparkle was like to have grown to a great flame. For whether the Bishop of Winchester, called Henry Beaufort, son to John, Duke of Lancaster, by his third wife, envied the authority of Humfreie, Duke of Gloucester, Protectour of the realm; or whether the duke disdained the riches and pompous estate of the bishop; sure it is that the whole realm was troubled with them and their partakers; so that the citizens of London were faine to keep dailie and nightlie watches, and to shut up their shops for fear of that which was doubted to have ensued of their assembling of people about them." To decide their differences, the bishop called upon the Duke of Bedford, his nephew, then Regent of France, to arbitrate between them. The latter came over, but shifted the responsibility off his own shoulders by calling an assembly of the nobility at St. Alban's, known as the *Parliament of Bats*, because the partizans of either party came to the spot armed with clubs, weapons of steel being forbidden them. The duke, however, compromised the matter by taking the great seal from his uncle and handing it over to the Protector. On his return to France, Beaufort accompanied him as far as Calais, and in the church of that town received a cardinal's hat, with the title of St. Eusebius, sent him by Pope Martin V. He then returned to England as papal legate, and made his entry into London with great pomp. He soon after, in 1427-8, raised a body of men for a crusade against the Bohemian Hussites, but was compelled by the council, in the first instance, to employ them in the war in France. He afterwards, however, fulfilled his original intention, and served in Bohemia till superseded by cardinal Julian.

During his absence, his old enemies were busily at work, and poured innumerable charges against him into the royal ear; and attempts were even made to deprive him of his bishopric—so that on his return to England, he thought it necessary to procure, under the great seal, a pardon for all crimes and misdemeanours that might be alleged against him from the beginning of the world down to the 26th of July, 1437. The remoteness of the period to which he thought it necessary to ascend, is a singular proof of the extent of his fears, and his opinion of the accusing powers of his enemies. He showed himself, however, rather lax in not taking precautions as to the future also; for it would have been quite as easy to have convicted him of an offence to be committed in the year 1900, as of one which took place in the days of the patriarch Methuselah.

Notwithstanding his vigilance, however, the indefatigable protector again drew up articles of impeachment against him in 1442, and presented them to the king, who referred them to his council. The council being mostly composed of ecclesiastics, were of course inclined to favour the cardinal, and delayed their decision so long, that Gloucester lost patience, and abandoned the prosecution. He was murdered in May, 1447, it was suspected with the complicity, if not at the instigation, of the cardinal. The latter survived him only a month. He is said to have died in agony of remorse and despair, bewailing his crimes, confessing his manifold sins and wickedness, and offering untold sums for an hour of life. Shakspeare, in the last scene of the third act of the play to which we have already referred, draws a moving picture, into which all his mighty powers are thrown, of his last hours, as those of a despairing murderer and traitor, without one pleasant memory in the past, or one bright hope in the future. As the passage is doubtless familiar to most of our readers, we shall refrain from quoting it, and shall content ourselves with giving Holinshed's summing up of the cardinal's character, as a specimen of that worthy chronicler's powers of invective, as well as of English "undefiled," which many of our writers at the present day would do well to imitate. "During these doings, Henrie Beaufort, bishop of Winchester, and called the rich cardinal, departed out of this world. He was son to John, duke of Lancaster, descended of an honourable lineage, but borne in haste; more noble in blood than notable in learning; haucie in stomach, and high of countenance; rich above measure, but not verie liberale; disdainfull to his kin, and dreadfull to his lovers, preferring monie before friendship; many things beginning, and few performing, save in malice and mischief; his insatiable covetousness, and hope of long life, made him both to forget God, his prince, and himselfe. Of the getting of his goods, both by power legantine and spirituall briberie, I will not speak; but the keeping of them, which he chiefeilie gathered for ambitious purpose, was both hurt to his natural prince and native cuntry; for his hidden riches might have well holpen the king, and his secret treasure might have relieved the commualtie when monie was scant and charges great."

Though in this harsh judgment most English historians coincide, they all agree that by his death Henry lost one of his best and most faithful counsellors, and that from that day the state of affairs became worse and worse. Whatever use of his riches he might have made during his life, his disposal of them after his death was most praiseworthy. He left an enormous sum to the prisons of London; he ordered two thousand marks to be distributed amongst the poor tenants of his diocese, and forgave the rest all they owed him. He founded an hospital at Winchester, and endowed it with the sum of £158 13s. 4d. per annum, according to the value of money at that time, besides some lands for the maintenance of two chaplains, a master, thirty-five poor men, and three nurses. He left jewels and plate of considerable value to nearly every cathedral church and monastery in England. He lies buried in Winchester cathedral; but of the inscription on his tomb nothing remains save the words *Tribulaver, si nescirem misericordias tuas*—"I should be sorely troubled, did I not know thy mercy."

* In the earlier periods of English history this office was held exclusively by churchmen.